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SOLDIERS OF V CORPS' 165TH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE BATTALION DEPLOY TO AFGHANISTAN

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233rd Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

SCHWEINFURT, Germany -- Soldiers and family members in V Corps' 165th Military Intelligence Battalion know the rigors of separation all too well. Troops in the battalion's Company A and Headquarters and Headquarters Service Company said goodbye to friends, spouses, children and other loved ones here once more February 25, this time departing for a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan instead of Iraq.



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Pfc. Richard Lowe of V Corps' 165th Military Intelligence Battalion shares a last moment with Pfc. Lakesha Franklin before boarding a bus in Darmstadt, Germany to begin a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan with the unit.

As the troops prepared to depart, many focused their efforts on squeezing in last-minute hugs and kisses.

"I know the time will go fast. I'm just disappointed that I won't be with my girl for a while," said Spc. Courtney Wheller as he embraced his girlfriend, Spc. Phoebe Porter.

"There is a lot of sadness and anxiety," said the unit's Family Readiness Group leader, Tammy Johnston, as she did some last-minute packing for her husband. "We

have to deal with emotions and concerns that no family members fall through the cracks."

Johnston said the FRG chain already had an e-mail and telephone network in place to keep in touch with all spouses left behind and to inform them of goings on "downrange."

For many of the spouses going through the deployment again, it's better going through the separation with familiar folks from the first time around, said Melissa Flentie.

"It's good to have the same people around, because you don't really have to explain anything to them," she said. "They just know."

"We just have to be strong for the kids, take care of ourselves and pray for the spouses," said Lori Sanchez.

The unit's deployment "veterans" are quick to point out to "newbies" what can be expected on the home front and on the front lines.

"The FRG and (Base Support Battalion) chains of command will do everything they can to ensure everything is taken care of for the family members," said Maj. Bobby Sanchez. He added that throughout the deployment the Soldiers need to have confidence in their training and know that they are well trained and equipped.

The FRG hosted a farewell party February 23 for the troops and families, and the company guidons from each company were cased.

While deployed, the unit's mission is to help the people of Afghanistan secure a safe environment, as well as to provide intelligence support, said Lt. Col. Gary Johnston, the battalion's commander.

"The sooner we go, the sooner we can come back," said Company A commander Capt. Michael Flentie, as he scurried around ensuring all last-minute items had been taken care of.

Following a quick formation, family, friends and co-workers said one more round of goodbyes, the troops boarded buses and waved to loved ones as they departed.

